

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 5455

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TAGS: MILI, MARR, IT
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE SAVINGS IN DOD PERSONNEL COSTS IN ITALY

1. EMBASSY HAS READ WITH INTEREST THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S REPORT TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS ENTITLED "POSSIBLE SAVINGS IN DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PERSONNEL COSTS IN ITALY."

2. THE REPORT IS A GENERALLY ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF THE COST AND CONDITION OF EMPLOYMENT OF DOD PERSONNEL IN ITALY, AS WELL AS OF THE POSITION OF THIS EMBASSY WITH REGARD TO THE KEY QUESTION OF REPLACING ITALIAN NATIONAL EMPLOYEES WITH AMERICAN DEPENDENTS. HOWEVER, THOUGH THE REPORT RATHER PRECISELY DELINEATES THE CONSTRAINTS AS THEY EXIST, IT SEEMS TO SUGGEST THAT THEY CAN BE IGNORED IN DOD PLANNING. THE MYOPIA WITH WHICH THIS CONCLUSION IS REACHED IS FURTHER DISTORTED BY A SENSE THAT THE SIZE OF THE ITALIAN WORK FORCE EMPLOYED BY THE U.S. FORCES IN ITALY IS SMALL ENOUGH AS TO BE OF NO CONCERN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LARGE NATIONAL PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT. ITALIAN EMPLOYEES, ITALIAN UNIONS AND THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT OBVIOUSLY FEEL OTHERWISE. IT IS THEIR PERCEPTION THAT TO A LARGE DEGREE WILL CONDITION THE LIMITS OF U.S. PERSONNEL POLICIES AT OUR MILITARY INSTALLATIONS. THE ALTERNATIVE WILL BE DISRUPTIVE, PER-
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HAPS PARALYZING STRIKES, INTERMINABLE AND EXPENSIVE LAWSUITS, AND, MORE IMPORTANT OVER THE LONG TERM, THE LOSS OF THE GOODWILL REMAINING IN THE COMMUNITIES WHERE U.S. FORCES ARE ESTABLISHED. A MILITARY INSTALLATION BESIEGED BY PICKET LINES AND ISOLATED FROM A HOSTILE HOST COMMUNITY CAN HARDLY BE EXPECTED TO PERFORM EFFICIENTLY THE FUNCTION FOR WHICH IT WAS DESIGNED. THE REQUIREMENTS OF MUTUAL SECURITY

CARRY LITTLE WEIGHT IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES.

3. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME REDUCTIONS IN FORCE AT AMERICAN MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN ITALY, TWO OF WHICH ARE ILLUSTRATIVE. THAT WHICH OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF THE MOVEMENT OF THE MEDIV ENGINEERS FROM CAMP DARBY INVOLVED HALF A HUNDRED ITALIANS. IT WAS HANDLED CAREFULLY (MANY EMPLOYEES WERE PLACED ELSEWHERE) AND THE REPERCUSSIONS WERE MANAGED WITH RELATIVE EASE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE RIF OF FIVE LOCAL EMPLOYEES AT A NON-APPROPRIATED FUND ACTIVITY IN SAN VITO DEI NORMANNI RESULTED IN A TWO-DAY GENERAL STRIKE. CENTRAL TO THE COMPLEX OF ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE LATTER EPISODE WERE (1) THE ELIMINATION OF JOBS IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF HEAVY UNEMPLOYMENT, AND (2) THE HIRING OF AMERICAN CITIZEN DEPENDENTS TO REPLACE ITALIAN BREADWINNERS. WHAT WAS DEMONSTRATED WAS THAT IN THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES ORGANIZED LABOR CAN (HOWEVER RELUCTANTLY) ACCEPT MINOR REDUCTIONS IN THE NUMBER OF JOBS AVAILABLE. IT CANNOT ACCEPT HAVING THE NUMBER OF JOBS REMAIN STABLE WHILE THE NUMBER AVAILABLE TO ITALIAN CITIZENS DIMINISHES. THESE ARE THE INESCAPABLE ISSUES NOW AND FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THE ATTITUDE OF ITALIAN LABOR TOWARD ITS EMPLOYMENT IS, AND WILL REMAIN, PROPRIETARY. IT IS AN ATTITUDE WE CAN DEPLORE BUT CANNOT IGNORE.

4. THERE IS A FURTHER FACTOR IN U.S. MILITARY/ITALIAN
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LABOR RELATIONS WHICH BEARS REMEMBERING. THOSE RELATIONS REMAIN RELATIVELY TRANQUIL. TO A LARGE DEGREE THAT TRANQUILLITY IS OWING TO LABOR REPRESENTATION BY COMPARATIVELY MODERATE UNIONS. IN AREAS SUCH AS NAPLES, EMPLOYEE DISSATISFACTION WITH SOME CONDITIONS HAS RESULTED IN EARLY INDICATIONS THAT ORGANIZING HAS BEGUN BY MORE MILITANT AND RADICAL UNIONS. SHOULD IT BE PERCEIVED THAT THERE IS AN EMERGING POLICY TO REPLACE ITALIANS WITH AMERICAN DEPENDENTS, WE CAN ONLY EXPECT THE REINFORCEMENT OF THAT MOVEMENT.

5. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WORLD-WIDE POLICIES ON MATTERS SUCH AS EMPLOYMENT OF MILITARY DEPENDENTS AT U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS OBVIOUSLY HAS GREAT ADVANTAGES AND DIRECTLY ADDRESSES A PROBLEM WE FULLY UNDERSTAND AND WITH WHICH, IN PRINCIPLE, WE FULLY SYMPATHIZE. IN THIS MISSION'S VIEW, HOWEVER, A POLICY SUCH AS THAT PROPOSED WOULD LEAD TO SERIOUS DETERIORATION OF THE STILL FAVORABLE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN ITALY OPERATE. WE BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE SPECIAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH MAINTAINING A U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE ABROAD. THIS IS ONE OF THEM. GARDNER

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